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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
OMB-01 TRSE-00 DOE-11 SOE-02 /075 W
----------105401 031751Z /43
R 031611Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8103
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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FOLLOWING MESSAGE SENT PARIS DATED 23 FEBRUARY 1978
FROM NICE RPTD FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO:

QUOTE:
AMCONSUL NICE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH ELECTIONS - MARCH 1978

SUMMARY: IN THE TWO WEEKS LEFT BEFORE THE ELECTION, THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE OF MAJOR SURPRISES IN THE FOURTEEN DEPUTIES' SEATS IN THE NICE CONSULAR DISTRICT. THIS AREA IS NOT TYPICAL OF FRANCE IN THAT ALMOST EVERY-BODY IS PREDICTING THE MAJORITY WILL WIN MOST OF THE SEATS. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE LEFT WILL WIN AT THE MOST SIX AND AT LEAST TWO. MY GUESS IS THREE OR FOUR: ONE OR TWO IN CORSICA, BERNARD CORNUT-GENTILLE (THE MAYOR OF CANNES, HE IS NOT AFFILIATED BUT IN THE AS-SEMBLY VOTES WITH THE LEFT) IN THE CANNES-ANTIBES-
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MANDELIEU-LANAPOULE AREA AND ONE SEAT IN THE ALPES DE HAUTE PROVENCE. THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST SEAT IN NICE HELD BY VIRGILE BAREL IS UP FOR GRABS THIS YEAR WITH BAREL'S RETIREMENT. IT IS NOT EXPECTED THAT FRANCO-MONEGASQUE RELATIONS WILL CHANGE, AT LEAST INITIALLY, IF THE LEFT WINS IN MARCH. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE REASONS WHY THIS AREA IS NOT TYPICAL OF FRANCE ARE COMPLEX BUT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

A. THE POPULATION IS OLDER THAN IN FRANCE AS A WHOLE WITH MANY RETIRED PEOPLE WHO GENERALLY HAVE A MORE CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDE.

B. HISTORICALLY THIS AREA AND PARTICULARLY THE ALPES MARITIMES HAS LOOKED EAST TO ITALY RATHER THAN WEST FOR MANY OF ITS CONTACTS. (MANY FAMILIES IMMIGRATED FROM ITALY SEVERAL GENERATIONS AGO. THE AREA FROM NICE EAST DID NOT BECOME A PERMANENT PART OF FRANCE UNTIL 1860.) EXCEPT FOR PETROLEUM, ITALY AND GERMANY ARE THE MAJOR TRADING PARTNERS OF THE ALPES MARITIMES.

THERE IS CONCERN HERE ABOUT THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY BEING INCLUDED IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. THERE IS ALSO FEAR THAT FRANCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) PARTICIPATION IN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AFTER A VICTORY OF THE LEFT IN MARCH, 1978 WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT.

C. THERE IS NO LARGE PROLETARIAT BUT IN ALL FIVE DEPARTMENTS MOST WORKERS ARE CONNECTED TO THE SERVICE
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INDUSTRIES/CONSTRUCTION AND AT LEAST PARTIALLY DEPENDENT UPON TOURISM AND FOREIGN MONEY. AS A WHOLE THE WORKING POPULATION IS MORE FLUID AND LESS IDEOLOGICALLY INCLINED THAN IN THE OTHER LARGE METROPOLITAN AREAS IN FRANCE SUCH AS LYON AND MARSEILLE.

D. THE MAJOR NEWSPAPER IN THE AREA, NICE MATIN, HAS PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL STATING THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY COULD NOT POSSIBLY PAY FOR ITS ECONOMIC PROGRAM.

E. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HARDCORE PARTY MEMBERS, VOTERS OF THIS AREA ARE LIKE VOTERS ANYWHERE: I.E., THEY ARE CONFUSED BY INTRICATE SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES. THE TENDENCY IS TO PICK RELIABLE CANDIDATES TO GET A GENERAL IDEA OF WHERE THE CANDIDATE OR THE PARTY STANDS ON ISSUES AND DETERMINE IF THE CANDIDATE OR THE PARTY IS MODERATE OR EXTREME IN THE VOTERS' OWN TERMS. HERE THE TENDENCY IS TO LEAN TOWARD MODERATION AND TO STAY WITH CANDIDATES THAT ARE OF KNOWN QUALITY. THIS GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS CONSERVATISM IS REFLECTED IN THE HIGH PERCENTAGE OF PRESENTLY

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ELECTED ASSEMBLY MEMBERS WHO ARE WITH THE PRESENT MAJORITY.

F. RELATED TO THE ABOVE THERE ARE SEVERAL PERSONALITIES WHO WILL PROBABLY WIN, INCLUDING JACQUES MEDECIN, (MAYOR OF NICE AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TOURISM), BERNARD CORNUT-GENTILLE AND FERNAND ICART. THE LATTER IN SPITE OF HAVING A TOUGH RACE WILL PROBABLY WIN WITH THE BOOST HE HAS GOT BEING APPOINTED MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT.

2. WHERE IS FRANCE GOING AFTER THE ELECTIONS:

DESPITE THE LOCAL TENDENCY FOR THE PRESENT MAJORITY, MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THE LEFT WILL WIN NATIONALLY. THIS INCLUDES POLITICIANS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AS WELL AS VOTERS IN THE STREET. MANY GIVE THE MAJOR REASON AS A DESIRE BY THE VOTER FOR CHANGE IN THE "TEAM" RUNNING
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FRANCE. TO A CERTAIN EXTENT THE POLITICIANS IN THE MAJORITY ARE ENGAGED IN WISHFUL THINKING. IF THE LEFT WINS, MITTERRAND, THE ARGUMENT GOES, IS TOO HONORABLE AND TOO COMMITTED TO THE COMMON PROGRAM TO TURN HIS BACK ON THE COMMUNISTS IN AN ATTEMPT TO FORM A CENTER-LEFT COALITION. THE VIEW IS THAT THERE WILL BE EITHER A CONSTITUTIONAL OR ECONOMIC CRISIS OR BOTH AS A RESULT OF THE LEFTIST GOVERNMENT PROGRAM. THIS WILL FORCE THE PRESIDENT TO CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS WITHIN A YEAR AND THE LEFT WILL BE SOUNDLY DEFEATED.

THE CRISIS WILL INCLUDE MAJOR LABOR UNREST WHICH MANY BELIEVE WILL HAPPEN WHOEVER WINS THE ELECTION. SOME GO SO FAR AS TO PREDICT A SITUATION SIMILAR TO MAY '68 BUT MOST BELIEVE THAT LABOR'S DESIRE FOR HIGHER SALARIES AND MORE BENEFITS WILL HELP IN CREATING A SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRUNCH. POLITICIANS HERE WHEN PUSHED ON THE ISSUE ADMIT THAT THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ECONOMIC OR CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS THAT COULD BE MANAGED IN WHICH CASE NO NEW ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD. IF THIS HAPPENS A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT WOULD BECOME FIRMLY ENTRENCHED. IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO DISLODGE SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND TO REVERSE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THEY INITIATED. AN INTERESTING SIDELIGHT ON HOW A LEFT VICTORY WOULD AFFECT FRENCE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WAS PROVIDED BY MY TUNISIAN COLLEAGUE (PRO-TECT SOURCE). HE CLAIMED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT MUCH PRE-FERS THE PRESENT MAJORITY OVER A LEFTIST GOVERNMENT MAINLY BECAUSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE LEADERS OF THE PRESENT FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND THE TUNISIANS ARE VERY CLOSE AND OF LONG STANDING. HE SAID THAT WHEN DEALING WITH MEMBERS OF THE MAJORITY ONE DEALS WITH INDIVIDUALS AND NOT WITH AN IDEOLOGY AND IT IS POSSIBLE THEREFORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO REACH COMPROMISES. HE FEARS, SHOULD THE LEFT WIN, TUNISIAN RELATIONS WITH FRANCE WOULD SUFFER; THERE WOULD BE LESS CONTACT AND FEWER EXCHANGES OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH THEY NEW GOVERNMENT.

2. LOCAL REACTIONS TO A LEFT VICTORY:

A. THIS ELECTION HAS PROVIDED THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) A CHANCE TO ORGANIZE AN AREA IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY WEAK. ALL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS OF THE ALPES MARITIMES AND CORSICA ARE WITNESSING AN INCREASE IN SOCIALIST VOTER ORGANIZATION WHICH HAS PERMITTED

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THE PARTY TO PRESENT SOME VIABLE CANDIDATES. IF THE LEFT COMES TO POWER IN MARCH SUCH EFFORTS WILL RECEIVE A BOOST AND THE PS COULD BECOME A SERIOUS ALTERNATIVE TO THE PCF WHICH HAS BEEN THE MAJOR PARTY OF THE LEFT. (RADICAL LEFT IN CORSICA.)

B. MANY LOCAL LEADERS PREDICT NEW FACES IN THE PREFECTURE SHOULD THE LEFT COME TO POWER. RELATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE PREFECTURE COULD BE-COME STRAINED.

C. THERE HAS BEEN A PICK-UP IN INTEREST AT THE CONSULATE IN THE PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING IMMIGRANT VISAS. IT SEEMS THAT SOME PEOPLE AT LEAST THINK OF IMMIGRATION AS THE ANSWER TO A VICTORY OF THE LEFT. THESE ARE MOSTLY INDIVIDUALS WITH MONEY TO INVEST.

D. CONSTRUCTION OF NEW APARTMENTS AND VILLAS, A MAJOR SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE ALPES MARITIMES, IS

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IN A PAUSE, WAITING FOR THE ELECTION. IF THE LEFT WINS THIS PAUSE COULD CONTINUE UNTIL GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS PROPERTY AND INVESTMENT HAS BECOME CLEAR. MANY

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OF THE PURCHASERS OF THESE APARTMENTS AND VILLAS ARE NOT FRENCH AND DIFFICULT TAXATION, INERHITANCE AND OWNER-SHIP LEGISLATION MAY SCARE AWAY BUYERS. A PROLONGATION OF THIS PAUSE WOULD PRODUCE SHORT-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS IN THE AREA AGGRAVATING ANY OTHER LABOR OR ECONOMIC UNREST.

E. MONACO - MOST MONEGASQUE LEADERS BELIEVE THAT IF THE LEFT COMES TO POWER NO CHANGES IN FRANCO-MONEGASQUE RELATIONS WILL OCCUR AT LEAST FOR AWHILE. ONE HIGHLY PLACED INDIVIDUAL STATED THAT IN HIS OPINION THERE WAS NO REASON FOR ANY FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR MONACO. IT IS TOO SMALL AND ITS BANKING SYSTEM PROVIDES MONETARY AND FISCAL BENEFITS TO FRANCE. MONEGASQUE BANKERS ARE UNANIMOUS IN INDICA-
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TING THAT A FLIGHT OF CAPITAL FROM MONACO STOPPED WHEN THE FRANC STOPPED FALLING AND WAS PROBABLY RELATED MORE TO THE DEVALUATION OF THE FRANC THAN TO POLITICAL REASONS.
EDENSWORD UNQUOTE
HARTMAN

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